Unit .28

Session .01

Transformed by the Holy Spirit

Scripture

Acts 2:1-4, 22-24,36-47

1 When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. **3** They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. **4** Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. … **22** "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know. **23** Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used[a] lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him. **24** God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death. … **36** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." **37** When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" **38** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call." **40** With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!" **41** So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them. **42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. **44** Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Intro Options

Main Point:
The Holy Spirit fills God's people to teach and empower us.

Option 1

Your students should pretend they work for a major motion picture studio. The big wigs have come to your students and asked them to come up with the idea for their next superhero movie. Specifically, they want this movie to be an origin story (backstory). Give your kids a few minutes to come up with their stories. Consider having them create brief storyboards (like a comic strip) or skits illustrating their stories.

Once students have shared their stories, ask them to identify common patterns or themes. Today's lesson will be about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

- **What parallels can be drawn between origin stories and Acts 2?**

For example, many origin stories involve an initial public display of the superhero's power; in Acts 2, the apostles speak in tongues, and three thousand people were saved after Peter's sermon. Also, in origin stories, even though the protagonist's character remains basically the same, he or she experiences a new or tremendous increase in some power. In the same way, the apostles' characters remained the same, but they received great power from the Holy Spirit.

Option 2

Separate your students into small groups to make skits. Give each group an index card.

Tell each group to write on their index card the most important task they can think of that a group of people can do and a resource that they would request in order to accomplish the task. Try not to give them suggestions, but if necessary, you might suggest providing food and shelter, or sharing the good news of Jesus. Once they have written their tasks, the group should pass their index card to the group on their left.

Each group should now have a new card. It is their job to create and perform a skit showing how they would accomplish the task with the resource on their card. Talk about what tasks the students tried to accomplish, what resources they had, and how they used those resources. How might their skits have looked different with different tasks? Different resources? Different methods?

Today's lesson will show the Holy Spirit being poured out on the early believers. Their task is to be Jesus' witnesses and they are given the Holy Spirit to enable them. Ask your students what other parallels they can see between their skits and Acts 2.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Acts 2:1-4.

Imagine a friend or family member who is never grateful for the gifts he receives, and he has a way of letting you know it. Sometimes it's just a shrug—"Hmm, thanks." Other times it's a rather direct comment—"It's okay, but I'd rather have new sunglasses." No matter how hard you try, he just doesn't appreciate the gifts.

- **When has someone shown a lack of appreciation for a gift you've given? How did it make you feel?**

In many ways, Christians respond similarly to the Holy Spirit. Though Scripture refers to Him as a gift, we can at times respond to His presence with a total lack of appreciation to God. It may be because we simply don't understand His purpose, therefore, we miss the point altogether. As God's gift to us, our gratitude for the Holy Spirit should be evident in our lives. Rather than ignoring the Spirit, we should celebrate His existence and, further, that He's been given to us. If the Father is the "giver of every good and perfect gift" (Jas. 1:17), then it makes sense that we should receive the Holy Spirit with joy.

Perhaps the most obvious struggle for most Christians is their misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit's purpose. At times, well-meaning Christians read Acts 2 and end up disagreeing, even arguing, about the role or legitimacy of spiritual gifts, like speaking in tongues. While that issue is certainly important, we must remember that the Holy Spirit comes into the lives of all followers of Christ to bring unity (Eph. 4:3-5) and so that we can believe and live out the gospel in our everyday lives. This was the main reason Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

In the Old Testament, God's presence dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-35) and temple (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 7:1-2). Today, God's Spirit not only dwells among His people, but within them.

- **How does the Holy Spirit minister in the lives of believers?**

It's important that we understand that we are saved not by our background, race, family, or—we are saved by the grace of God shown in the work of Christ, which is sealed by the Holy Spirit. Praise God for the Holy Spirit's work in our lives!

Read Acts 2:1-4.

At Pentecost, after the Spirit had filled the believers who were together in Jerusalem, which moved them to declare the power of God in the languages of everyone present, Peter stood up and began to boldly and clearly proclaim the gospel. The people were convicted, and asked how they should respond. Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation cannot be earned. Instead, it is the work of the Triune God—the Father planned it, Jesus accomplished it, and the Holy Spirit applies it. This is why we must always listen to the Spirit—He seals our salvation and helps us to live in obedience to God (Eph. 1:13). Once we have repented and been baptized in the name of Jesus, we listen to the Spirit through:

- *Scripture*—Reading the Bible is the primary way we "listen to the Spirit." We may not always want to read the Bible, or we may not feel like we always understand it. Still, we must commit to spending time in God's Word,—it is the Spirit's ordinary means for speaking to us.
- *Prayer*—We may be tempted to think that prayer is saying exactly the right things and praying for no less than an hour (and we better have our eyes closed!). But that's not what Paul tells us—he says that God looks at our hearts, and the Spirit intercedes for us. (Rom. 8:26-27).

- **How have you experienced the Spirit speaking to you through the Bible and**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The Holy Spirit fills God's people to teach and empower us.

Acts 2

2-4. We know that the Holy Spirit communicates with us as believers, but why should we listen?

- First, we listen to the Holy Spirit because He is God. As Christians, we believe that God is a Trinity—one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The triune God has called us, saved us, and empowered us to live out the gospel (Eph. 1:3-14). We believe that the Holy Spirit is God living inside of us (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Throughout the biblical storyline, God is said to have lived in the temple. Today, we no longer go to the temple to worship—God the Holy Spirit now lives inside of us.
- Second, we listen to the Holy Spirit because He reminds us of the gospel. God wants nothing more than for us to know, tell, and live out the gospel. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit would be sent to remind them of the truth (John 14:25-26). We see the work of the Trinity here again. The Father sends the Spirit to remind us of Jesus, of the gospel.
- Third, we listen to the Holy Spirit because He has sealed our salvation. Not only does the Spirit of God live inside us and remind us of the gospel, He also seals our salvation. We are sealed for salvation because Jesus has paid it all—so the inheritance of eternal salvation given to God's children is available to us.

The Spirit's coming was accompanied by physical phenomena that confirmed that something extraordinary was taking place. First, there was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind that came from heaven. Wind was often used as a metaphor for the breath of God in the Old Testament (2 Sam. 22:16; Job 37:10; Ezek. 37:5). The wind was followed by tongues of fire visibly resting on the disciples. Fire, too, was associated with God, a link that John the Baptist had spoken about (Luke 3:16). These tongues of fire were evidence that the Holy Spirit had come and filled them, and the immediate effect was that all who were present began to proclaim the gospel in different languages.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 08, DDG)

Personality of the Holy Spirit

The Bible not only affirms the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, but also His personhood. Many people have mistakenly believed that the Spirit is a force or power, not a person. However, Scripture affirms His personhood by acknowledging that He is treated as a person (Acts 5:3; 7:51; Heb. 10:29), acts like a person (John 14:26, 15:26; Rom. 8:14), has attributes of a person (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Eph. 4:30), and acts in personal ways (Isa. 63:10; Acts 13:2). In addition to these, the Bible also affirms that Christians relate to Him personally (Acts 5:3-4; 7:51).

TEACHING PLAN

- **How have you experienced the Spirit speaking to you through God's Word?**

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Acts 2:42-47 ultimately describes a bunch of normal folks, like you and me, praying, eating, and worshiping together. This new community of believers lived out their faith in what seems ordinary in many ways, but which was evidence of the Spirit's work in their lives. They were united in their spirits, and this affected the ways they lived. They were a close community! And as others saw the change in them, the power of the Spirit working in the lives of these new believers impacted their neighbors as well.

We see in Acts 2 that the church grew in extraordinary ways, but this wasn't the result of the Apostle's plans or efforts—it was the byproduct of the church being the church, and God's working through them. We live in a different context than did the newly forming church in Jerusalem, and though we may try, we can't totally recreate first-century Christianity. But the key ingredients haven't changed and our calling is the same. Jesus said, "Everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35). When we listen to the Spirit's speaking through Scripture, pray in the Spirit, live in close community with other believers, and boldly and clearly share the gospel, God will bring people into the church and His name will be glorified.

- **When you think of "church growth," do you think of numbers or maturity? Why are both important?**
- **If growth happens only by the power of God, why is it important that we live as witnesses, sharing the gospel?**

In Defense (p. 10, DDG)

Peter proclaimed, "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). Many people think that Jesus performed miracles to "prove" who He was to the people who witnessed these supernatural events. Yet this isn't the best way to think about Jesus' miracles. Jesus didn't need to prove anything. Instead, we should see Jesus' miracles as signs intended to help those weak in faith to overcome their struggles to believe. Jesus said that the works He did in the name of the Father—including miracles, but the ways He loved and served every day as well—testified to Him as the Messiah (John 10:25). Jesus also said that the Spirit, who would come after Jesus' departure, would testify to the world about Jesus (John 15:26). We need also to keep in mind that Jesus said His followers would testify about Him (John 15:26). There was a time when, according to God's plan, Jesus used miraculous demonstrations to help people overcome their struggles to believe. Today, even though He can still do miracles, in helping people to believe, God generally uses His people's declaring the gospel and the Spirit's opening their eyes to its truth.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The Holy Spirit fills God's people to teach and empower us.

Acts 2

There are several things we need to understand about the early church:

- They were devoted to the apostles' teaching—specifically, the teachings from Scripture—and that they believed right theology.
- They were devoted to fellowship and the breaking of bread, and they lived in close community.
- They were devoted to prayer—inviting the Spirit to work among them and open their eyes to the truths of Scripture and praying for one another, that God would provide for their needs.
- They held all things in common, sharing generously with one another as there were needs.
- They were generous not only to others in the church, but to outsiders and those in need.
- They met at the temple for more structured corporate worship, as well as in their homes
- They were joyful and humble, allowing the gospel to shape their interactions.
- They had a good reputation with outsiders, and God blessed their witness.

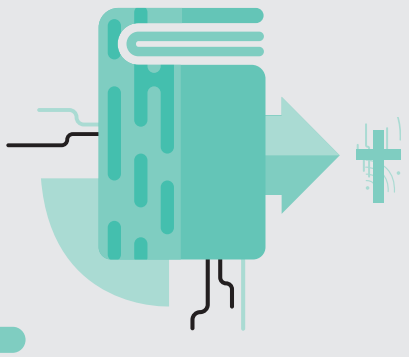
Activity

Each of the three points in today's lesson emphasizes how the Holy Spirit does something to God's people. Your students (alone or in pairs) are going to create visual guides (small posters or large cards) for the three points. These guides might be put up in Sunday school rooms, or missionaries or youth ministers might use them as teaching aids.

Each guide should take the form, "The Holy Spirit is like X, and God's people are like Y, because Z" The students should then come up with something for X, Y, and Z. For instance, t they might say the Holy Spirit is like helium and God's people are like a hot air balloon, because He fills them and empowers them. They might say, "The Holy Spirit is breath and God's people are like a flute, because He works through them so people can hear the music of God's love." For each point of the lesson, students should make a visual guide; each student (or pair) will have three guides by the time they are finished with the lesson. Once students have completed their guides, let them share. Debrief the good analogies they used. Recognize that no analogy will be perfect, especially because the Holy Spirit is a person, not merely a force or a power.

(p. 09, DDG) Christ Connection

Jesus had instructed His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit because He would empower them to be His witnesses on earth. Just as Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, filled them, and empowered them at Pentecost resulting in about 3,000 new believers. Still today, God gives the Holy Spirit to those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and the Spirit works in our lives to make us more like Jesus.



TRANSFORMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 2:1-4, 22-24, 36-47

TRANSFORMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit fills God's people to teach and empower us.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

RESPONSIBILITY – Taking ownership of my choices and behavior, including the consequences.

HEAD

What happened when the Holy Spirit came?

How did Peter advise the people to respond when they understood their sin?

HEART

When someone else points out our mistakes, it can be tempting to defend ourselves and reject their opinion or feel indifferent about the situation. What would it look like for you to own your mistakes and take responsibility for them?

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples to help them turn away from sin and become more like Him. When have you felt convicted or "pierced to the heart" about your own sin? Has this led to a change in your heart and way of living? Why or why not?

HANDS

Each of us behaves in ways that are not beneficial or are sinful. Things like not finishing our homework, treating another kid badly to impress a popular friend, or choosing not to tell the truth to avoid getting in trouble. Choose to do one or both of the following options this week:

1. Think about a way you acted wrongly in the recent past. Take the time to own your sin and confess it both to God and anyone you hurt and ask for their forgiveness.

2. Think of a specific way you are living that the Bible says is wrong. Ask God to give you a change of mind and heart and help you to live like Jesus in this way through the power of the Holy Spirit. (If you're not sure what Jesus would do, ask your LifeWise teacher, youth leader or pastor)